

POEMS

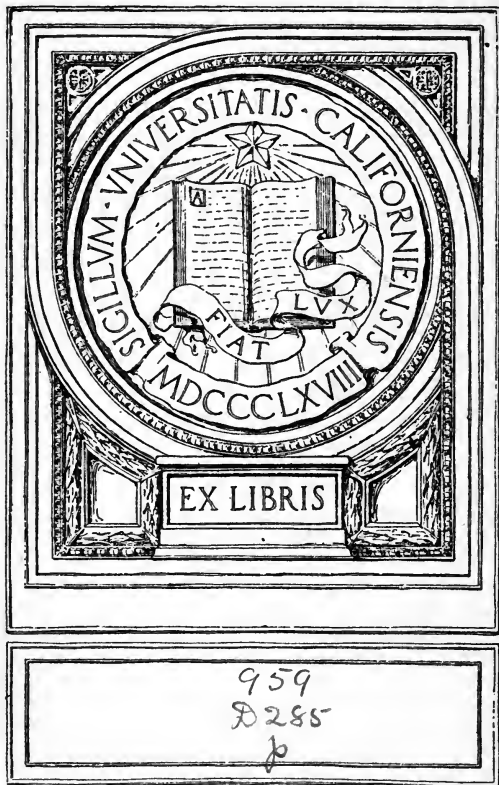
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POEMS

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P O E M S

BY

GEOFFREY DEARMER



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Dedication

TO CHRISTOPHER

KILLED, SUVLA BAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 1915.

*At Suva when a sickening curse of sound
Came hurtling from the shrapnel-shaken skies,
Without a word you shuddered to the ground
And with a gesture hid your darkening eyes.
You are not blind to-day—
But were we blind before you went away?*

*Forgive us then, if, faltering, we fail
To speak in terms articulate of you ;
Now Death's celestial journeymen unveil
Your naked soul—the soul we hardly knew.
O beauty scarce unfurled,
Your blood shall help to purify the world.*

*Awakened now, no longer we believe
Knight-errantry a myth of long ago.
Let us not shame your happiness and grieve ;
All close we feel you live and move, we know
Your life shall ever be
Close to our lives enshrined eternally.*



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My thanks are due to the editors of the *Nineteenth Century*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Observer*, *New Statesman*, and *Westminster Gazette*, for permission to reprint certain of these poems.

I

THE DARDANELLES

B

FROM " W " BEACH

THE Isle of Imbros, set in turquoise blue,
Lies to the westward ; on the eastern side
The purple hills of Asia fade from view,
And rolling battleships at anchor ride.

White flocks of cloud float by, the sunset glows,
And dipping gulls fleck a slow-waking sea,
Where dim steel-shadowed forms with foaming bows
Wind up the Narrows towards Gallipoli.

No colour breaks this tongue of barren land
Save where a group of huddled tents gleams white ;
Before me ugly shapes like spectres stand,
And wooden crosses cleave the waning light.

Now the sky gardeners speed the hurrying day
And sow the plains of night with silver grain ;
So shall this transient havoc fade away
And the proud cape be beautiful again.

FROM "W" BEACH

Laden with figs and olives, or a freight
Of purple grapes, tanned singing men shall row,
Chanting wild songs of how Eternal Fate
Withstood that fierce invasion long ago.

A PRAYER

LORD, keep him near to me :
Revive his image, let my darkening sight
Renew his life by death intensified
(His beating life so pitifully tried)
That we may face the night
And shade the agony

We pray in barren stress
Where stricken men await the shrill alarm
And nightly watch, in silent order set,
The beckoning stars enshrine the parapet.
Lord, keep his soul from harm
And grant him happiness.

When all the world is free,
And, cleansed and purified by floods of pain
We turn, and see the light in human eyes ;
When the last echo of War's thunder dies ;
Lord, let us pause again
In silent memory.

Gallipoli, *October*, 1915.

FALLEN

THE days shall darken and sink down to Night,
And Night shall break in the bleak dawn of Day :
The years shall dim his face, our fleeting sight
Shall see his splendid image fade away
Beyond the knowledge of our drifting thought
Which moves in circles to the source again,
Beyond dark seas with shivering stars inwrought,
Beyond war-burdened men in stricken pain.

I searched in rage and passionate despair
Down winding paths of thought, and comradeless
In the full surge and tumult where he died
I turned ; and saw my Brother standing there.
His face was like a dawning happiness—
I saw wounds in his hands, his feet, his side.

Gallipoli, *October*, 1915.

THE TURKISH TRENCH DOG

NIGHT held me as I crawled and scrambled near
The Turkish lines. Above, the mocking stars
Silvered the curving parapet, and clear
Cloud-latticed beams o'erflecked the land with bars ;
I, crouching, lay between
Tense-listening armies peering through the night,
Twin giants bound by tentacles unseen.
Here in dim-shadowed light
I saw him, as a sudden movement turned
His eyes towards me, glowing eyes that burned
A moment ere his snuffling muzzle found
My trail ; and then as serpents mesmerise
He chained me with those unrelenting eyes,
That muscle-sliding rhythm, knit and bound
In spare-limbed symmetry, those perfect jaws
And soft-approaching pitter-patter paws.
Nearer and nearer like a wolf he crept—
That moment had my swift revolver leapt—

THE TURKISH TRENCH DOG

But terror seized me, terror born of shame
Brought flooding revelation. For he came
As one who offers comradeship deserved,
An open ally of the human race,
And sniffing at my prostrate form unnerved
He licked my face.

THE SENTINEL

An Episode at the Evacuation of Gallipoli.

HE stood enveloped in the darkening mist
High on the cape that proudly kept her tryst
Above the narrow portal. All the day
White shell-flung water-spouts had scattered spray
Round Helles, warden of the Eastern seas ;
And still the boom of Asian batteries
Rumbled around the cape. The sentinel
Spied from his high cliff-towered citadel
The leaping flash of guns ; but ere the roar
Sprang from its den on the dim Asian shore,
He blew a trumpet. Then, like burrowing moles,
Dim forms below dashed headlong to their holes
The while that hurtling iron crossed the sea,
And fifteen seconds seemed eternity.

Below we lay
Crushed in a lighter ; and the towering spray
That lately blurred the clear star-laden sea
Subsided in the vast tranquillity.

THE SENTINEL

Now, chafing like taut-muscled charioteers
With every sense on tiptoe, we strained ears
For whispers, or the catch of indrawn breath.
Still not the word to cut adrift the rope
That moored us to a wharf of floating piers :
And thus alternately in fear and hope
Swung the grim pendulum of life and death

Then suddenly the sound
Of that loud warning rang the cape around.
We knew a gun had flashed, we knew the roar
That instant rumbled from the Asian shore ;
And we lie fettered to a raft ! . . . The shell
Climbs its high trajectory . . . Well,
What of it ? Fifteen seconds less or more—
One—two—three—four—five—six—seven
(Steady, man,
It's only Asiatic Ann) . . .
How slow the moments trickle—eight—nine—ten
(They're wonderful, these men) :
Am I a coward ? I can count no more.
Hold Thou my hands, O God.

The sea, upheaved in anger, rocked and swirled ;
Niagara seemed pelting from the stars

THE SENTINEL

In tumult that epitomised a world
Roused by the battling impotence of wars.
We heard a whispered order to escape,
And casting loose, incredulously free,
Unscathed, exulting in the amber light,
We left behind the immemorial cape,
Where silently above the narrow sea
A sentry stood alone, and watched the night

MUDROS AFTER THE EVACUATION

I LAUGHED to see the gulls that dipped to cling
To the torn edge of surf and blowing spray,
Where some gaunt battleship, a rolling king,
Still dreams of phantom battles in the bay.
I saw a cloud, a full-blown cotton flower,
Drift vaguely like a wandering butterfly ;
I laughed to think it bore no pregnant shower
Of blinding shrapnel scattered from the sky.
Life bore new hope. An army's great release
From a closed cage walled in by fire and sea,
From the hushed pause and swooping plunge of shells,
Sped in a night. Here children in strange peace
Seek solitude to dull the tragedy
And needless horror of the Dardanelles.

Mudros, *January*, 1916.

THE DEAD TURK

DEAD, dead, and dumbly chill. He seemed to lie
Carved from the earth, in beauty without stain.

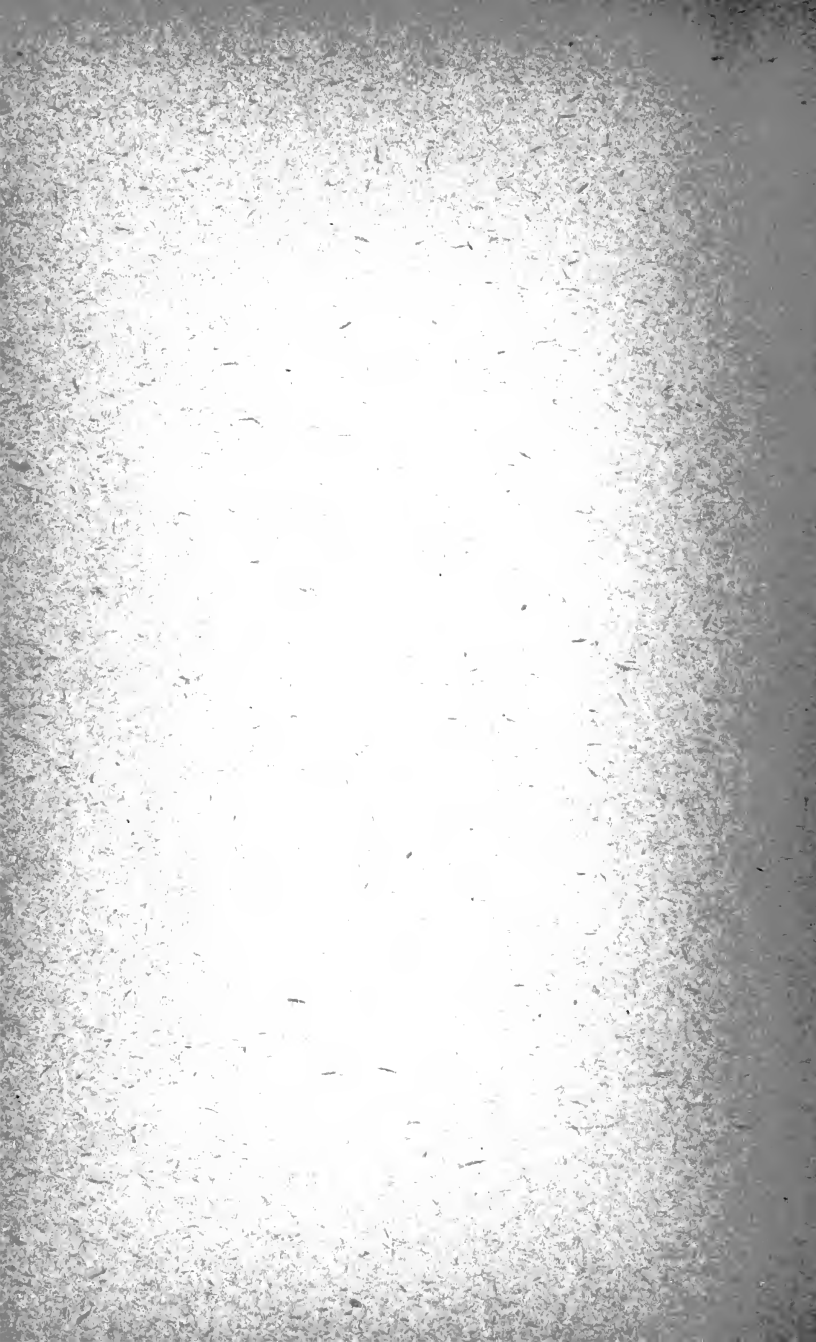
And suddenly

Day turned to night, and I beheld again

A still Centurion with eyes ablaze :

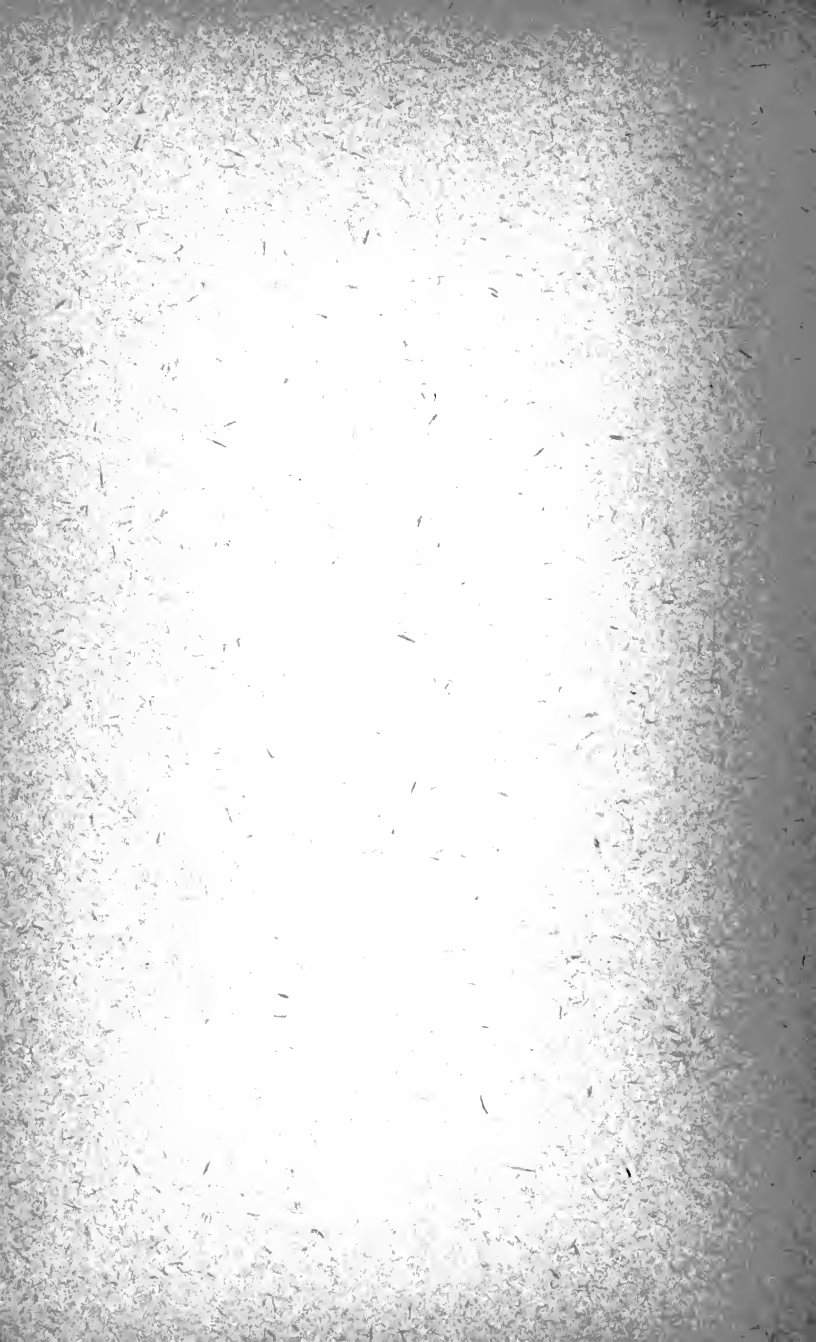
And Calvary re-echoed with his cry—

His cry of stark amaze.



II

B. E. F.



MISSING

THEY told me nothing more : I bow my head
And squander life, between the quick and dead
Irresolute. Yet I again could be
Mistress of life, Queen of my destiny,
If I but knew—But now Remembrance plays
My being back through spring and summer days
We passed together ; and I see him still
Swinging to meet me down the tardy hill.
That day the birds were new-inspired ; a breeze
Bestirred, as if in wonderment, the trees ;
The very clouds paused in their breathless race,
And shadows played upon his open face ;
And I remember how his laughing eyes
Shone deep as pools in sea-blue ecstasies.
The meadow grasses rustled in the heat ;
I even heard the silence of his feet
Down the slow hill—And now the dawning birth

MISSING

Of beauty woke my senses to the earth
Unveiled in radiance. The sweeping skies—
Unseen unless reflected in his eyes—
Marshalled cloud companies with new delight ;
Just for us two the spangled dome of night
Swung out the journeying moon.

But still I hold

Burnt in my memory in beaten gold
Days when the Spring stirred in each waking bush
A blue-flecked jay or tawny-feathered thrush,
And drowsy Winter, startled unawares
By arc-winged partridges or listening hares,
Fled guiltily. We heard the magpies call—
Those dominoes at Nature's carnival—
And once a kingfisher, a lovely gleam
Snatched from a rainbow, darted to a stream.
The snowdrops bowed their heads for us to see,
Shy peeping buds of hooded chastity ;
And stalwart cowslips raised sun-glinted eyes
To those who stooped to pluck their sanctities.
Blue squills and crocuses that scorn the wind
Speared upward proudly and besought mankind
To step with care. Near by, we searched a glade
Where violets brood in sweetness, half afraid

MISSING

To wake their petals. On we roamed, and soon
The flower that shares her secret with the moon
In pale gold fellowship peeped out, among
A host of truculent daffodils that flung
Their trumpets down the wind.

Each breathless day
Broke to fulfil its promise, till the May
Had fledged her clustered blooms and swung her pride
In bowing sweetness to the country side.
Beauty was born again. But now the sound
Of heavy Autumn patters to the ground,
And loud discordant booms of thunder roll
Where that enchanted owner of my soul
Lies dead, or dying, or is living still :
At last the fibres of my struggling will
Falter exhausted, and my cowering brain
Cries out in anguish like a child in pain.

If he is dead, then I abide to prove
That brief fulfilment may be perfect love.
How should I grieve ? His life inspired in me
A joy that shall outlive eternity,
Wrought out, complete, unsnared by time and age,
My jewelled past, my priceless heritage.

MISSING

Shall misery usurp my realm of years
And leave me drowning in self-pitying tears,
A derelict in my own whirlpool swirled—
Me—whom Love crowned an empress of the world ?

But sometimes 'ere the light
Glimmers dawn-pearled to splash the feet of night,
Ere red sun-gilded riot floods the sky,
A whisper, swelling to a ringing cry,
Tells me he's living still. No lash could sting
Like this persistent voice re-echoing
That mocks me as I stumble to my feet.

O, shall I find him wandering in the street ?
But every beckoning corner drags me past
Strangers, new faces, each one like the last
Dull, cold, inscrutable. At times I caught
The look, the walk, the gesture that I sought ;
And once with throbbing veins I found those eyes
That shone like pools in sea-blue ecstasies,
But looked beyond me—cold, expressionless,
In vacant wonder at my helplessness,

Then, haunted by that stare,
Beaten, I knew the bedrock of despair.
O, Thou who poised the world, are all my tears
Too light, too pitiful to reach Thine ears ?

MISSING

Locksmith of happiness, aloof, apart,
Am I too impotent to touch Thine heart ?
Tell me he's dead or dying ; say he stands
Seeking for guidance the warm touch of hands,
Doomed in an instant to eternal night,
With only mind and memory for sight—
For I could cheer him.

But, Lord, quench this drought,
The unfathomable immensity of doubt :
Tell me he's maimed or crippled, torn or blind,
Staring through eyes that show his wandering mind :
Tell me he's rotting in a place abhorred,—
Not this, not this, O Lord !

TWO TRENCH POEMS

I

THE STORM NIGHT

PEAL after peal of thunder rolls and rolls
(Still roar the howling guns, and star-shells rise)
We perish, drowned in anger-blasted holes,
Give ear, O Lord ! Our very manhood cries,
Shell-fodder yea—but spare our human souls
From fury-shaken skies !

II

RESURRECTION

FIVE million men are dead. How can the worth
Of all the world redeem such waste as this ?
And yet the spring is clamorous of birth,
And whispering in winter's chrysalis
Glad tidings to each clod, each particle of earth.
So the year's Easter triumphs. Shall we then
Mourn for the dead unduly, and forget
The resurrection in the hearts of men ?
Even the poppy on the parapet
Shall blossom as before when Summer blows again.

GOMMECOURT

I

THE wind, which heralded the blackening night,
Swirled in grey mists the sulphur-laden smoke.
From sleep, in sparkling instancy of light,
Crouched batteries like grumbling tigers woke
And stretched their iron symmetry ; they hurled
Skyward with roar and boom each pregnant shell
Rumbling on tracks unseen. Such tyrants reign
The sullen masters of a mangled world,
Grim-mothered in a womb of furnaced hell,
Wrought, forged, and hammered for the work of pain

For six long days the common slayers played,
Till, fitfully, there boomed a heavier king,
Who, couched in leaves and branches deftly laid,
And hid in dappled colour of the spring,
Vaunted tornadoes. Far from that covered lair,
Like hidden snares the sinuous trenches lay
'Mid fields where nodding poppies show their pride

GOMMECOURT

There tall star-pointed streamers leap and flare
And turn the night's immensity to day,
Or rockets whistle in their upward ride.

II

The moment comes when thrice-embittered fire
Proclaims the prelude to the great attack.
In ruined heaps, torn saps and tangled wire
And battered parapets loom gaunt and black :
The flashes fade, the steady rattle dies,
A breathless hush brings forth a troubled day,
And men of sinew, knit to charge and stand,
Rise up. But he of words and blinded eyes
Applauds the puppets of his ghastly play,
With easy rhetoric and ready hand.

Unlike those men who waited for the word,
Clean soldiers from a country of the sea ;
These were no thong-lashed band or goaded herd
Tricked by the easy speech of tyranny.
All the long week they fought encircling Fate,
While chaos clutched the throat and shuddered past.
As phantoms haunt a child, and softly creep
Round cots, so Death stood sentry at the Gate

GOMMECOURT

And beckoned waiting terror, till at last
He vanished at the hurrying touch of sleep.

The beauty of the Earth seemed doubly sweet
With the stored sacraments the Summer yields—
Grass-sunken kine, and softly-hissing wheat,
Blue-misted flax, and drowsy poppy fields.
But with the vanished day Remembrance came
Vivid with dreams, and sweet with magic song,
Soft haunting echoes of a distant sea
As from another world. A belt of flame
Held the swift past, and made each moment long
With the tense horror of mortality.

That easy lordling of the Universe
Who plotted days that stain the path of time,
For him was happy memory a curse,
And Man a scapegoat for a royal crime.
In lagging moments dearly sacrificed
Men sweated blood before eternity :
In cheerful agony, with jest and mirth,
They shared the bitter solitude of Christ
In a new Garden of Gethsemane,
Gethsemane walled in by crested earth.

GOMMECOURT

They won the greater battle, when each soul
Lay naked to the needless wreck of Mars ;
Yet, splendid in perfection, faced the goal
Beyond the sweeping army of the stars.
Necessity foretold that they must die
Mangled and helpless, crippled, maimed and blind
And cursed with all the sacrilege of war—
To force a nation to retract a lie,
To prove the unchartered honour of Mankind,
To show how strong the silent passions are.

III

The daylight broke and brought the awaited cheer,
And suddenly the land is live with men.
In steady waves the infantry surge near ;
The fire, a sweeping curtain, lifts again ;
A battle-plane with humming engines swerves,
Gleams like a whirring dragon-fly, and dips,
Plunging cloud-shadowed in a breathless fall
To climb undaunted in far-reaching curves ;
And, swaying in the clouds like anchored ships
Swing grim balloons with eyes that fathom all.

GOMMECOURT

But as the broad-winged battle-planes outsoared
The shell-rocked skies, blue fields of cotton flowers,
When bombs like bolts of thunder leapt and roared,
And mighty moments faded into hours,
The curtain fire redoubled yet again :
The grey defence reversed their swift defeat
And rallied strongly ; whilst the attacking waves,
Snared in a trench and severed from the main,
Were driven fighting in a forced retreat
Across the land that gaped with shell-turned graves

IV

The troubled day sped on in weariness
Till Night drugged Carnage in a drunken swoon.
Jet-black, with spangling stars athwart her dress
And pale in the shafted amber of the moon,
She moved triumphant as a young-eyed queen
In silent dignity : her shadowed face
Scarce veiled by gossamer clouds, that scurrying ran
Breathless in speed the high star-lanes between,
She passed unheeding 'neath the dome of space,
And scorned the petty tragedy of Man.

GOMMECOURT

And one looked upward, and in wonder saw
The vast star-soldiered army of the sky.
Unheard, the needless blasphemy of War
Shrank at that primal splendour sweeping by.
The moon's gold-shadowed craters bathed the ground—
(Pale queen, she hunted in her pathless rise
Lithe blackened raiders that bomb-laden creep)
But now the earth-walled comfort wrapped him round,
And soon in lulled forgetfulness he lies
Where soldiers, clasping arms like children, sleep.

Sleep held him as a mother holds her child :
Sleep, the soft calm that levels hopes and fears,
Now stilled his brain and scarfed his eyelids wild
And sped the transient misery of tears,
Until the dawn's sure prophets cleft the night
With opal shafts and streamers tinged with flame,
Swift-merging riot of the turbaned East.
Through rustling gesture loomed the advancing light;
Through fitful eddying winds, grey vanguards came
Rising in billowy mountains silver-fleeced.

And with the dawn came action, and again
The spiteful interplay of static war :

GOMMECOURT

Dogged, with grim persistence Blood and Pain
Rose venomous to greet the Morning Star.
But others watched that lonely sentinel
Chase fleeting fellow-stars before the day ;
Fresh men heard tides of thunder ebb and flow.
—Stumbling in sleep, scarce heeding shot or shell,
The men who fought at Gommecourt filed away :
The poppies nodded as they passed below.

They left the barren wilderness behind,
And Gommecourt gnarled and dauntless, till they
came

To fields where trees unshattered took the wind,
Which tossed the crimson poppy heads to flame.
But one stood musing at a waking thought
That spurred his blood and dimmed his searching
eyes—

The primal thought that stirs the seed to birth :
Here where the battling nations clashed and fought
The common grass still breathed of Paradise
And Love with silent lips was Lord of Earth.

B. E. F. 1916.

A VISION

BEFORE the dawn-wind swept the troubled sky
And stirred the stricken trenches far and wide,
I saw the Lord of Holiness pass by,
With Mary at His side.

With Mary Michael passed, for I could hear
His clashing arms, and see his spangled sword.
Loudly I cried out, "Mother !" then in fear,
"O Mother of our Lord."

For in her eyes all human sorrow burned,
All tenderness lay naked when she smiled ;
And once she stooped to kiss, and once she turned
And shuddered like a child.

He moved through all the surge and clash of war,
The King of Kings since Brotherhood began ;
But in His still and shadowed face I saw
The agony of Man.

A VISION

And as I gazed, the ruined fields of France
 Loomed to the dawn in shades of shifting grey ;
Dumbly I stood to arms, as in a trance
 I watched the climbing day.

Was this a dream ? Yet Mary saw the sky,
 Lit by a vision from the darkness hurled ;
A little dream which made a baby cry—
 A dream which saved the world.

REVELATION

CAN death give you such dignity, and pride
So beautiful it puts our grief to shame ?
For now we stumble as we speak your name,
Yet you were just a boy before you died.
We question blankly, pondering heavy-eyed,
Can this be he we used to praise or blame
In careless moments, ere the trial came
When all the bravest hearts in anguish cried ?
Then, humbled, we beheld our poor disguise,
False moods and manners clothed in empty speech
Which drowned the silence—till there came a day
That smote our vision to awakened eyes :
For God bent down to bring you to our reach,
But ere we touched you, you had gone away.

TELL ME, STRANGER

TELL me, Stranger, is it true
There is magic happening,
Are *all* the dappled fields of Kew
Bowling to their Lord the Spring ?

Are the bluebells chaste and mute
Dancing in each dale and hollow
Dew-sprinkled, with a glad salute
To omnipotent Apollo ?

Tell me, do the feathered creatures
Flutter as in days of yore,
What are the " distinctive features "
Of the Swallow's Flying Corps ?

Here there is no magic, Stranger,
Save within our merry souls—
For some wanton god in anger
Punches earth with gaping holes.

TELL ME, STRANGER

Yet the stifled land is showing
Here and there a touch of grace,
And the marshalled clouds are blowing
Through the aerodromes of space.

Hate is strong, but Love is stronger,
And the world shall wake to birth
When the touch of man no longer
Stays the touch of God from Earth.

Tell me, Stranger, is it true
There is magic happening,
Are *all* the dappled fields of Kew
Bowling to their Lord the Spring ?

B. E. F., *April*, 1917.

SPRING IN THE TRENCHES

THE racing clouds have borne her message down
And blown a thrilling rumour, from the far
Heart-centres of each crowded port and town,
And up the flowing arteries of War—
Life, life, green tales of corn in sprouting blades,
Of swallows crowding with sea-sprinkled wings
And ash-buds amber-gummed round close-furled
green,
High blossom mantling murmurous orchard glades
In air a-tingle April-sweet and keen—
Ah, we have heard of wondrous happenings.

For now the magic carnivals begin :
The lilac broods in honeyed secrecy
And dappled lawns are changed—a Harlequin
Has brushed the tangled carpet silently—

SPRING IN THE TRENCHES

We know how white narcissus fills the lake
With dancing shadows ; how in open blue
A chestnut builds her clustered pyramids,
And down below anemones awake ;
Long-hushed the violets open wide their lids,
And all the dreamed-of fantasy comes true

Glad tidings thrill the re-awakened earth
By daffodils and blue-bells heralded ;
Spring with her van imperial comes forth
To herald Summer proudly canopied
Beneath the bowing leaves. Persistent Spring
Bestirs the seed enshrined in Winter's store ;
And even round the parapet a breath
Of far-flung prophecy is clamouring :
“ Behold new life within the tomb of death
“ Importunate and vivid as before.”

ON THE ROAD

WE halted, with the urgent Spring behind
Our straining teams, where all the land was black,
And huddled woods lay beaten, starkly blind :
Their mangled branches loomed athwart the track
Grotesque and terrible. Yet near the way,
A river, scatheless as the open sea,
Flowed like a breathing hope that cannot die
In desolation. Now, at setting day,
Moored water lilies, pale as argent sky,
Cling to the twilight fading silently.

Such is the tale of memory, ere night
Had deepened, and our weary convoy slept
Beside the way. Slow-rising points of light
Twinkled amid the spangled netting swept
Across the ebon desert ; and a gleam
Pierced the cloud-woven pillows of the moon.

ON THE ROAD

Now slumber freed me from the iron cage
That bound the snarling war ; and, in a dream,
The panorama of a dawning age
Unrolled, a world slow-waking from a swoon.

Before my gaze a teeming city loomed
Gay with the bustling clamour of the street—
The very town an easy word had doomed
And cast in ashes at the trampling feet
Of mortal gods. Street, corner, square and place,
Seemed woken from a long and squalid trance—
I saw a nation growing like a flower ;
A nation true and loyal to a race
That forged an army of clean-soldiered power
Wrought by the common chivalry of France.

Here was no arrogance of martial pride,
The fireside boast that sows the fatal seed,
For happiness had come from those who died
Stark of delusion and the deadly creed
Of false romance. I saw a world reborn—
The very battlefield was robed again
In lines of chequered land, and bordered round
With stretching roads and rills. The popped corn

ON THE ROAD

Held rubies set in gold, and far beyond
Lay a surf-ravelled sea and swarded plain.

I marvelled, till oblivion shadowed all,
Blurred in the dawning light of every day.
It was so true, I scarcely heard the call
To feed and water and to move away.
We stretched our limbs, and packed each heavy
load ;
Moved on, and left the weary night behind,
Through torn and withered trees that stared aghast ;
Yet, through the veil that shrouded all the road
I saw new radiance in the land we passed,
And heard a sudden murmur in the wind.

B. E. F., 1917.

KEATS, BEFORE ACTION

A LITTLE moment more—O, let me hear
(The thunder rolls above, and star-shells fall)
Those melodies unheard re-echo clear
Before the shuddering moment closes all.
They come—they come—they answer to my call,
That Grecian throng of graven ecstasies,
Hyperion aglow in blazing skies,
And Cortez with the wonder in his eyes.
In battle-wreaths of smoke they rise, and fall
Beyond—beyond recall.

Now all is silent, still, and magic-keen
(Yet thunder rolls above and star-shells fall)
And slowly pacing, rides a faery queen
Wild eyed and singing to a knight in thrall.
Enough—enough—let lightning whip me bare
And leave me naked in the howling air
My body broken here, and here, and here.
Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all,
The very all in all.

THE SOMME

From Amiens to Abbeville

*My swollen waters race,
And silver-veined by many a rill
Green hamlets thrive apace.*

From Amiens to Abbeville

*I labour at the listless mill,
And tempt the nodding daffodil
To blur my open face.*

But south of Amiens I flow

*Past dumb Peronne and Brie,
The peopled land I used to know
Now all belongs to me.*

*Yet phantom armies come and go,
And shadows hurry to and fro ;
Again my seething battles grow
In murdered Picardy.*

Behold the mother of a soil forlorn :

I suckled towns, and fed the forest land,

Behold my shattered villages and mourn :

How should I understand ?

THE SOMME

Why are those huts o'erpatched like dappled kine,
What are those weary men in blue and brown,
And humming craft that search my sinuous line ;
Why should my name re-echo with renown
Past every phantom town ?
But still my lily-breasted waters shine,
And still I chant my shadowy ripples down.

From peace through war my waters flow,
To peace again at sea,
The peopled land I used to know
Now all belongs to me.
Though battling armies come and go,
I toil and spin, I reap and sow,
And poppy-mantled meadows blow
In murdered Picardy.

My eddies bear the clinging scent of lime
To sweeten clouds of plume-tossed meadowsweet ;
My meadow grasses nestle with the thyme
And flowering rushes tower in the heat.
Low-brushing swifts and swallows splashed with white
O'er flash my laden mirrors slow and deep
That bear swift-merging canopies of sleep.

THE SOMME

Until the growing light
Has chased marauding owls, and butterflies,
Born of blue-woven skies,
Flutter away like hare-bells spurred to flight.
But who are these? What monstrous dragonfly
Is yonder air leviathan that swings.
In rigid curves adown the barren sky,
With cloudy satellites about her wings?
And I have seen
Dark horsemen ride with spears of tapered steel;
And bellowing guns beneath the far balloons.
And once a ponderous slug bedecked in green
Crept, in the waning moon's
Still-darkening gloom, and at her giant heel
White-gleaming wagons, rumbling wheel on wheel.

I triumph, triumph, search my sinuous line
Turn where you will. Look, there a signboard
shows
The lair of guns; already round the sign
White trumpeting convolvuli entwine
Their clinging arms, across the placard blows
A quiet-breathing rose.

THE SOMME

And still my lily-breasted waters shine
And loud my chanting grows :

From peace through war my waters flow
To peace again at sea,
The peopled land I used to know
Now all belongs to me.
Though battling armies come and go
I toil and spin, I reap and sow,
And poppy-mantled meadows blow
In murdered Picardy.

SOMME FLOWER TALK

SAID the Cornflower to the Pimpernel,
 " O sudden scarlet eyes,
You never bloomed till ploughing shell
 Laid bare earth's sanctities ! "

Then upward cried the Pimpernel :
 " Blue head in deeper blue,
'Tis strange this former waste of Hell
 Is Paradise anew.

" But who is Lord of Paradise
 And Commandant ; and who
Commands sky-faring butterflies
 All camouflaged in blue ?

" Are dandelion parachutes
 His messages, and do
Those armoured beetles clamber roots
 With news from Army Q ?

SOMME FLOWER TALK

- “ Above each water-lily ship
 The feathered red caps pipe,
Because the pear has earned a pip,
 The tiger-moth a stripe.
- “ The gorse artillery has eyes
 We never knew before,
And lady bees can organise
 The Honey Service Corps.
- “ Field-m Marshals rule the war behind
 The guns, but Summer shields
Here in the clash of human kind
 Her marshal of the fields.”

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

“ HE too ! He too ! ” The veteran paused, the sound
Of a light paper fluttering to the ground
Rustled the twilight peace : “ He—too—is—dead— ”
His wife, scarce faltering from the words she read,
Stared at the glowing sun, the while her eyes
Shone mistily in nameless agonies.
Five sons, and four were dead !
The clock ticked desolation to their ears
And silence gripped the moments as they passed
Too terrible, too passionless for tears.
At last,
Stronger than he, she curbed herself and smiled
And held him weeping like a weary child
Before the first immensity of pain.
Yet once again
She conjured scenes beyond the darkened cloud
That blurred the soul's horizon, as aloud

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

She spoke his name, and whispered little things
More pregnant than the utterance of kings.

That night she moved,
Spurred by devotion for the man she loved,
Without a pause for sorrow, or a breath
To murmur at the closing walls of death.
Love-steeled and queenly every step she trod ;
She climbed unfaltering, serenely browed,
Until she touched the very feet of God
Undaunted and unbowed.
And there in mystic awe
Slow-turning wheels of evolution spun
The poised and pulsing universe. She saw
All life and death synonymous, and birth
The dawn of human wonderment begun
(Birth of all birth) in other realms afar.
Below, ice-pivoted revolved the earth,
A traveller's joy it seemed, a mile-stone star,
Half-glowing, bathed in sun . . .

At dawn they met and found each other's eyes,
Asked the same questions, sought the same replies :
Their last and youngest fought while harsh com-
mands

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

Still goaded forward lashed and driven bands,
Where Vaux and Thiaumont twin sentinels
Loomed stalwartly. And still a howl of shells
Shattered the Verdun battlements in vain ;
Still domineered that keen death-tutored brain
Behind an army deaf to angry scorn,
The boast forgotten and the mask outworn.
At length she spoke : " Go quickly now," she said,
" Quick, the next hurrying hour may see him dead.
Find the Great Overlord and tell him all
Quick, for our boy may pass beyond recall
Meanwhile. He shall know happiness to come,
He, the last scion of our stricken home,
Shall blossom like a flower in early Spring,
I say it, I who bore him. Time shall bring
The old primeval happiness to birth
If there be any justice upon earth."—
She ceased ; it seemed her voice re-echoed still
As, strung with hope, he hurried on until
He reached the palace and besought for grace
To see his royal master face to face.

That night in sudden joy he urged away
Across Lorraine, for in his wallet lay

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

An order blazoned with the royal seals.
Hour after hour the car's revolving wheels
Rushed dizzily towards the high command
That held his son in fee. Around, the land
Awoke in changeless Spring. Four steady hours
They travelled, till the bloom of passing flowers
Brought tidings of the dawn. Then to his ears
Rumbled a distant thunder, sudden fears
Urged onward faster. Now the country showed
First signs of war-flung tentacles, the road
Lay pitted here and there, a wounded tree
No longer framed its lordly symmetry.
And soon the land whereon all life was stilled
Became as Man had willed.
At last his journey ended. Long delayed
He sought his goal, now pressing on, now stayed,
Until outside the place of high command,
The royal warrant burning in his hand,
He knocked—was bidden enter; tense and mute
He faced the marshal with a grave salute
And showed the royal word.
The crowded room was silent, no man stirred—
A pause as long as death, then, dragged and slow,
A voice—"Your son was killed an hour ago."

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

A clock importunately unconcerned
Repeated tick—tick—tick. His eyes discerned
A pen vague-sprawling, madly spiderwise.
Not a man glanced—Yet all the room had eyes :
Not a man spoke—Yet clamorous voices cried :
Stumbling, he walked outside

IN THE MESS

I SAT alone although the mess
Was full, when—quick as tears
A song of naked happiness
Came singing in my ears.

I summoned strength to kill a cry
And mad desire to weep ;
Then, glancing round me guiltily,
Found everyone asleep !

A TRENCH INCIDENT

We waited, as the thundering curtain swept
Our sector, and torn shards of iron fell ;
Dust from the parapet in showers leapt
Swirled up by bursting shell.

We waited, like a storm-bespattered ship
That flutters sail to free her grounded keel ;
The tingling moments tightened every grip
On rifles lanced with steel.

We knew the man who led us. All could hear
His ringing voice re-echo loud and strong,
Born of that higher bravery when fear
Is battled into song.

Then sudden fury lulled and far behind
Like angered beasts our batteries replied—
And suddenly he stumbled, dazed and blind,
He lay, but ere he died

He struggled for a while, then dimly smiled,
Wrapped in the comradeship of happy things,
Before he entered like a wondering child
The heritage of kings.

REALITY

BELOW my room the noise and measured beat
Of marching men re-echoed loud and clear ;
Now bobbing cavalry swung down the street ;
Now mules and rumbling batteries drew near.
But all is dim—The rolling wagon-stream
To Amiens between the aspen trees,
The stables, billets, men and horses, seem
Dead mummers of forgotten fantasies.

Only my dreams are still aglow, a throng
Of scenes that crowded through a waiting mind.
A myriad scenes : For I have swept along
To foam ashriek with gulls, and rowed behind
Brown oarsmen swinging to an ocean song
Where stately galleons bowed before the wind.

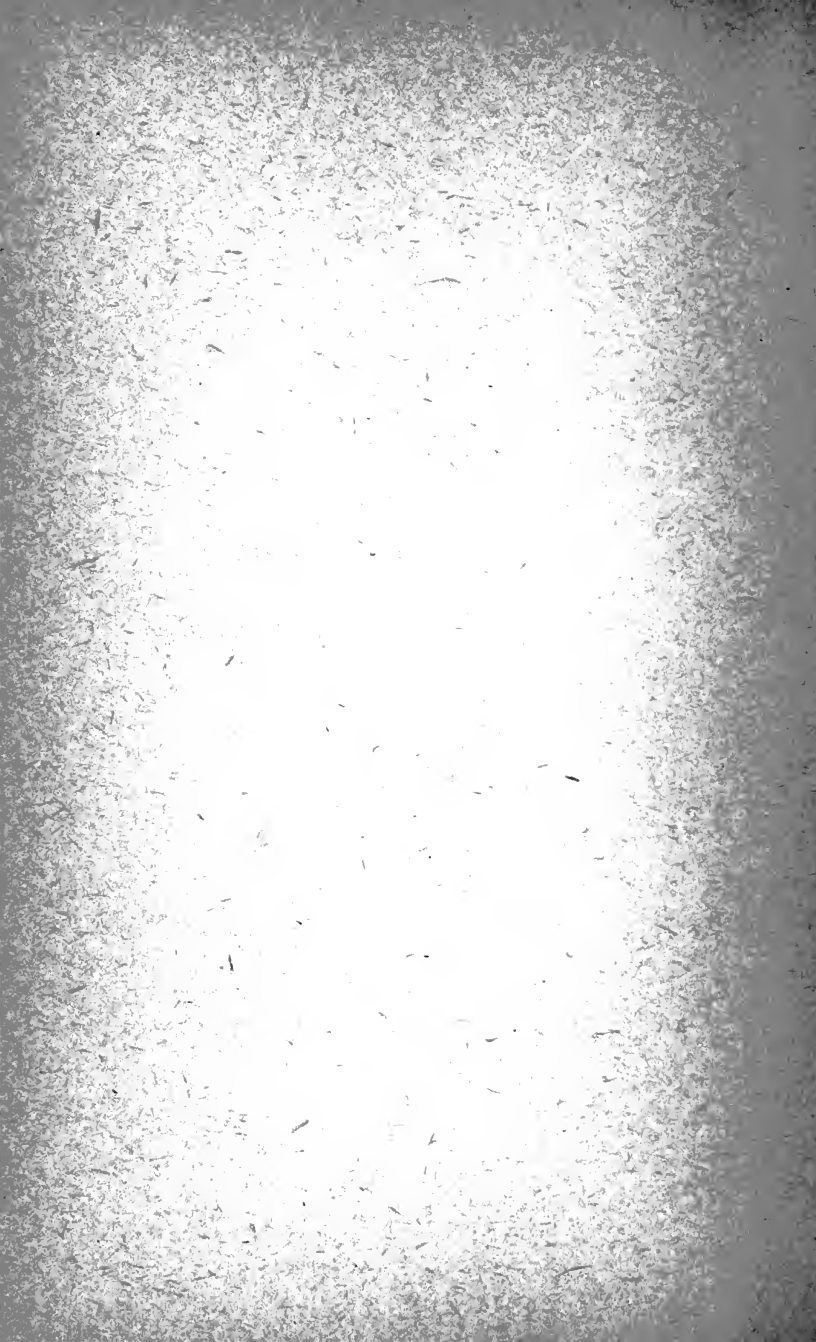
“ WE POETS OF THE PROUD OLD LINEAGE ”

APART we labour, and alone we climb
The barren heights ; for we the singing throng
Whose lives were hallowed by impassioned song
Must die or prove unworthy of our rhyme.
Man after man, we know the price of wars
Who watched the mask of Night whilst others slept,
And spread our laughter far and wide, but kept
Our tears and terror privy to the stars.

O magic gift omnipotent, to sing
And conjure Heaven from surrounding Hell.
Our lips and eyes are touched (for we have seen
Celestial weavers at the loom of Spring).
But O the iron bitterness and keen
Of voices ever clamouring farewell !

III

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS



SONG

WOULD I could commandeer the bees
To hum you droning symphonies.
I love the climbing thoughts that rise
To the sheer heaven of your eyes,
Wide laughter-dromes of wondering blue
Yes, yes, I do !

But when I sing of bubbling seas,
And laud the clapping hands of trees
Applauding in tumultuous skies,
Or window-wingèd dragonflies,
Or anything that's good and true
I sing of you—
Yes, yes, I do !

THE SHADOW

I STOOD one night where rivers pause to meet
And mingle in the traffic-rumbling sea :
The surge and clamour of a London street,
In tides alternate, rolled impassively.
Before my feet
Ran shouting boys, and through the pallid glare
Loomed gaunt leviathans that swayed and roared
Past glittering shops, and stations which outpoured
Load after weary load ; and everywhere
Strange sounds, a snatch of laughter, shout or word
Sleek-coated motor-cars that softly purred
Round corners sounding with the rustling beat
Of hurried swarms of feet.
And yet I seemed alone, and dumb-amazed
Before a towering building, wherein blazed
One staring patch of light, one amber square
That shone enshrouded by the dome of night

THE SHADOW

High in the naked air. And still I gazed
Until a shadow passed across the blind :
A shadow-woman pacing time away
Beside a bed, wherein a poet lay
Dying, dying—one whose mind
(A womb of beauty whereof love was lord)
Had fashioned symphonies of thought and word
Impassionately sweet. And suddenly
She paused—I saw the shadow of her hand
Stretch out and shudder back ; I saw her stand
All sorrow-bound in graven dignity ;
She bowed her head, her shoulders taut with pain,
Her figure burdened with the weight of tears.
Then all grew dark. And in my waking ears
The traffic surged again.

EVERYCHILD

WE take you through Pacific seas
To islands strange and new,
Where howling monkeys scale the trees
Alive with humming-birds and bees,
Where shiny seals and porpoises
Snort in the rolling blue.

Then quicker than a shaft of light
We shear the arctic foam,
And lounging bears of polar white
Roar loudly through the dancing night,
And drive the killer-whales to flight—
Upon the floor at home.

O hear the chant of Eastern song
Beneath Arabian stars,
Where camels slowly stalk along
And gleaming Arabs, tall and strong,
Buy gold and merchandise among
The riot of bazaars !

EVERYCHILD

The glow-worms crawl excitedly
And trim their lamps o' night ;
For often, ere the moon is high,
Bat-harnessed walnut-shells flit by
To bear them to the waiting sky
And set the stars alight.

The nodding poplars understand
And birds and beasts and flowers :
And we shall wander hand in hand
With better things than Peter Panned—
O what is footlight fairyland
Beside this world of ours ?

What matter if the clouds are grey
Or winter-keen and wild,
When you and I have found a way
To turn November into May ;
For Everyjoy is Everyday
And Everyman a child.

CHILD OF THE FLOWING TIDE

AWAY to the call of the racing sea—

(Child of the flowing tide)

A hundred chargers of ivory,

And two of them saddled for you and for me,

Are pawing and stamping the surf to be free

Where the wild sea-horses ride.

The deep water shall roar as we race from the shore

On the back of the flowing tide.

O hurry, the moon is away in the sky

(Child of the flowing tide)

With your heels well down and your heart set high

You're saddled and bridled, and so am I ;

So gather your reins, for the foam will fly

Where the wild sea-horses ride.

Grip tight with your knees as you gallop the seas

On the back of the flowing tide.

CHILD OF THE FLOWING TIDE

On the wide lagoon I'll meet you to-night

(Child of the flowing tide)

When the moon swings high and the stars are alight

And the roaring sea-chargers are ready to fight :

Their manes are all foam and their coats are all white

Where the wild sea-horses ride.

The deep waters shall roar as we race from the shore

On the back of the flowing tide.

EIGHT SONNETS

I

I TREMBLE at the outset, for I know
How rhythm halts and rhyme rings falsely true.
Yet courage, your disciple, bids me show
That speech may offer sacrifice to you.
Vain boast ! For if success in splendour came
Poised faultlessly in lines of perfect stress,
I must fall short of it in very shame
Unworthy of my sonnet's worthiness.

But should I fail, and feel the words I sought
Elusive, or bedecked with frail disguise
Of tattered sentiment, that risk I dare
Not hazard in the winding maze of thought,
Lest I should stir the wonder in your eyes
Or wind a little tangle in your hair.

EIGHT SONNETS

II

So let me fail : what matter if the wise
And worldly whisper, who so poor as they ?
For everywhere alike the common way
Has now become an earthly paradise.
And where you walk the very pavement cries
Of blue-bells, April-chimed, and fawns at play ;
And London seems a sylvan holiday
Of flower-hunting bees and butterflies.

So let me fail, for where I could succeed
How mean the quest, a climber gazing down
From the low vantage of some petty hill.
But chance success would be the gambler's thrill
Who plays with God for worlds, and wins indeed
The whole of Paradise for half-a-crown !

EIGHT SONNETS

III

I HAVE no room for jealous gods, and find
No ring of joy or laughter in the Creed,
Nor shall my great possession be resigned
In fear or favour of my spirit's need.
For joy is mine, and mine the teeming years
Unfettered in a world impassionate ;
Not mine a sorrowed Calvary of tears
Where love was vassal to the lords of hate.

Let others bow before a God unknown
Enshrined in words they dimly understand.
Let every man make Paradise his own—
My Goddess breathes and leads me by the hand.
O hush ! I dare not speak of it alone,
'Tis all too wonderful and strangely planned !

EIGHT SONNETS

IV

DAY after day my growing pinions beat
Impatiently ; yet, in a place unclean
I sought the dwarfed, the petty and obscene,
And aped the clownish mummers of the street,
Till suddenly the world grew strangely sweet,
All eager at a touch, and thrilling-keen :
With half-forgotten hands I strove unseen
To mould a little planet at your feet.

You spoke and there was light, and slowly grew
My teeming world of verse, a brotherhood
Of music, thought, and wonder, born anew,
Alive, aglow, in every varied mood ;
And when the waking truth is bursting through
I feel you bend to see that all is good.

EIGHT SONNETS

V

IF I had known what hourly happiness
In this my world your being could ordain,
How then should I have trysted with distress
And misery the cringing friend of pain ?
If I had seen beyond the looming years
Your shadow, grief had haunted me in vain,
For what are cataracts of human tears
Beside the boundless laughter of the main ?

O barren days bygone ! Now every field
Wakes clamorous with dawning life conceived,
So has the magic universe revealed
Whole happiness to one who half believed—
Whole happiness, and in my heart concealed
Wide wonder at the sacrament received.

EIGHT SONNETS

VI

"GREAT men and happy years," you say, from these
Your knowledge came, and your diviner powers
More thrilling than the honey-womb of flowers
Or the bright star-foam of the Pleiades.
So, did you learn the droning lore of bees
From some be-medalled soldier? Did you meet
Madonna-hearted statesmen in the street,
Or bishops, babbling of the opal seas?

O poor deceiver, conscript joys belong
To you as homage. For the happy years
Bear fruit to-day, and blossom like the flowers
That breathe of summertime in after hours.
For you were loyal to a creed of Song
Nor ever stooped to misery and tears.

EIGHT SONNETS

VII

WOULD I could throw my stuttering self away
And shrine the soul wherein all wonders beat,
Would I were you, for one brief holiday
The whole shy universe before my feet.
O happiness, to know joy's secret mine,
To hold adoring ministers in fee,
Narcissus-like to bless the Serpentine
And with the stars outdance Terpsichore.

For once a poet sang of happiness,
But now, like running flame, glad voices say—
“Joy is the sheer antithesis of wrong.”
Enough,—and I, no longer comradeless,
Behold exultant on the world's highway
Your being, and the proof of Pippa's song.

EIGHT SONNETS

VIII

WHEN you are old and dancing shadows play
Around the sky-blown laughter in your eyes
Shall I, unworthy of your new disguise,
Forget the sacrament and go away ?
Shall I adore, like sorrowed men to-day,
The child who gurgled in first ecstasies
At oxen (Mary said) that mooed surprise
And snuffed with wondering muzzles in the hay ?

O leave the past—the living world is mine
Warm, passionate, and breathing. Even so
Shall Life in after years make Earth divine
And fire shall burn as long as embers glow.
But he who babbled to the wondering kine
Is dead, long dead, two thousand years ago.

KEATS

TOUCH me, O Lord, and let my sonnet ring
With echoes. Now his words of crowned belief
In raging hours of pain and suffering,
Too high for praise, too terrible for grief,
Ring loud and clear. Last night his chariot rolled,
And I beheld him urge amid the stars
Cloud-fashioned steeds of snow moon-aureoled,
Himself a charioteer equipped for wars.

Faster and faster—men of Blood and Pain
Opposed in vast battalions, but he
Rolled back their army to the dark again
And triumphed while he sang exultingly
As now he sings. Boy of the glowing brain,
Dear Keats, your name is Paradise to me !

MEETING HER IN THE STREET

SHE'S coming down the road ! You know
Those laughter-woken eyes ?
I beckon at the stars—But O
If she should recognize :

Nearer and nearer yet she trod
Till (mad blood-dancing joy)
Down from the planet-fields of God
She nodded, " Hullo, Boy."

HER HOMAGE

SILENCE outlives the argument of kings
And best is dumb applause. Behold, she moves:
No soft-winged owlets blink, no cricket sings,
Before she greets the murmurous world she loves.
Now twirling parachutes of sycamore
Hang waiting, and the rippled trout-rings die,
The murmur round a jasmine honey store
Is still—a linnet falters suddenly.

From out the reeds an awe-struck otter peers
As eerie quiet speeds from bush to bush :
High Summer stands on tip-toe as She nears
The woods, and magic numbs the missel-thrush :
Above still grasses prick the listening ears
Of rabbits, and a squirrel whispers “ Hush ! ”

REACTION

AFRAID, afraid, I sought the kindly night
In fear that mocking fools should scrutinise
The beauty I discovered in men's eyes,
And mock me as a dreaming anchorite.
For long in fear I sinned against the light
And shrouded Poetry with vain disguise ;
Before I sang, unconscious as the skies,
Self-chanting songs, to me supreme delight.

But now, O littlest of all little minds,
High-browed, alone, aloof, you little know
How like you are to **Brown**, who lifts the blinds
Of his suburban villa, just to show
That he alone is up, but always finds
The neighbourhood awoke an hour ago !

APRIL

How much are you achieving

O April day,

By orchard looms a-weaving

All apple-gay ?

Tie on your cherry blossom, clothe your squills

Madonna-blue, and give your daffodils

Their collars of pale straw, and come away,

Your rain-awoken hills

Shall welcome May.

What is behind your weeping

O April tears ?

Your lilac plumes are sweeping,

Your silken spears

Of chestnut bristle in the changing sky

Whilst herded clouds foregather, 'neath the high

Storm-loud arena's thundering charioteers :

And beckoned silently

The swallow nears.

MAY-JUNE

Now is the swaddling husk of Winter shed,
And waking Summer, robed in windy showers,
Is heralded from silvered aspen towers
And orchards in high blossom garlanded.
Now sunlight, in the plumed laburnum flowers
And purple lilac, trembles overhead ;
And bees a-drone in field and flower bed
Make clamorous the trade of teeming hours.

Now the sweet-pea, all honey-laden, shows
Full-swollen sails, her mooring ropes of green
Encircle twigs. And soon the primrose queen
Lights her pale lamps of Evening 'mid the glows
Of brazen flower-suns, that burn between
The yawning honeysuckle and the rose.

THE STROLLING SINGER

SUN-BATHED in Summer peace the village lay
That afternoon. Along the happy street
Milk-fragrant kine, and wagons high with hay
Came lumbering. The fields were loud with bees
And drowsy with the wind-stirred meadowsweet ;
From bowing trees
Fell chatter, and above the garden wall
Wide sunflowers beamed at spearing hollyhocks
That dared the wind, and scorned the clustered stocks,
And bore their laddered blooms high over all.

Here amid Summer murmur and delight
The strolling singer came. The people heard
Stray snatches of a song—a laugh—a word,
And gossiping in groups of two or three
Stood all amazed. For no one came in sight,
Only the wind was laden drowsily
With mellow sounds that slowly growing strong
At last became a song :—

THE STROLLING SINGER

“Bend down, the marsh and meadow holds

Pale yellow pimpernels,
And sun-begotten marigolds,
Thyme, orchis, asphodels,
And borage born of ocean blue,
Plumed armoured thistles, fever-few,
Sea-campion globed, and clinging dew
In giant flower-bells.

“Bend down—an ebon beetle prowls

And there a swinging bee
Drinks honey from the laden crows
That clothe the foxglove tree.
And giant peacock butterflies
Light meadowsweet with sudden eyes,
And through the tangled grasses rise
Lucerne and timothy.”

Louder and louder grew the voice, until

A figure specked the heaven-touching hill,

And nearer, nearer, still . . .

The villagers in mingled fear and awe

Stood round on tiptoe waiting. Soon they saw

A little sylvan man with beckoning eyes

THE STROLLING SINGER

And limbs of lithe expression. Woven flowers
And grasses, splashed with rainbow-tinted showers,
And jewelled with alluring butterflies,
Enwrapped him. Russet face, clear-featured, gay
As pebble-rumpled streams, and tousled hair
Sun-dyed and naked. His limbs were bronzed and
bare,

And sprang, it seemed, from the wild interplay
Of flower-woven garb. Around his waist
Twined traveller's-joy and honeysuckle, sweet
And freshly dewed, and on his lissom feet
Were pointed shoes of silver beech rush-laced.

The village gazed in silence, till a child
Began :—" Who are you, funny man ?
Your face seems to be telling truth, your eyes
Are just the colour of blue butterflies,
O tell us who you are ? "

The stranger smiled,
And turned his face that bore the wistful, far,
Strange wonder-look of one whose dreams come
true,

Whose alchemy transfigures old and new.
Of one who plays Narcissus in Life's pool

THE STROLLING SINGER

And sees an image strangely beautiful . . .

Then suddenly they heard him cry :—

“ Come buy,

I own the laughing earth.

And all my chanted words are deeds ;

I follow where my fancy leads,

And sell my songs for mirth.

What will you buy ?

“ Speak hurriedly, and choose your song,

The poplar’s shadow creeps along,

Search hurriedly the Earth and Sky,

What will you buy ? ”

Meanwhile a crowd had gathered, in a ring ;

The butcher, grocer, postman, parson, clerk,

And all the village, open-mouthed and stark,

Stood mutely marvelling ;

And children clamoured round him with large
eyes

And pelted him for songs, like countless hail,

With pleadings, shouts and cries :—

THE STROLLING SINGER

' Sing us a song of Paradise,
Of railway engines, fawns,
Of stolen queens in guarded towers,
Of sprites and leprechauns"—
O HUSH ! All were dumb—
" Boy in blue smock, sucking your thumb,
With hair like a tangled chrysanthemum,
What would you like me to sing, Ocean-
eyed ? "

Loud the boy's answer rang,

" *I* want a song of flowers ! "

And this is the song he sang :

" Sisters of mercy are Cyclamen,
Snowdrops and Arums too,
But Primulas, Violets, Stocks, Mignonette,
Crocus aflame, and the Never Forget,
Are chaster than chastity too.
Now sulphur Laburnum and Lilac, adieu,
Good-bye April children to you !
For who
Will climb up the flowers of my Hollyhock
towers
With butterfly steeple-jacks blue ?

THE STROLLING SINGER

But, climber, beware !

Of Love-in-a-mist in a tangle of hair,

Of thistly Teazles, and wingèd Sweet-Peas

With tentacle tendrils that strangle with ease,

Of butterfly Orchis a-clamour for bees.

For Dragon may Snap you, and Sundew may
trap you,

Before you have started, before you have parted

The grass at the foot of my Hollyhock trees.

But think of the view

Of the whole garden side !

We'll charter a dragon-fly homeward, and ride

Down to our Rosemary, Marjoram, Rue,

Lavender, London Pride."

All watched him, held, bewitched, and with him clung

To the green tops of slowly swaying towers,

Where bees had scattered pollen-dust, that hung

Above the teeming nectaries of flowers,

And all again were young.

But now the poplars cast their lengthening bars

Of latticed shadow ; now a scarf unfurled,

Like parrot-tulip petals hued and torn,

Across the West was flung.

THE STROLLING SINGER

And now, before the twilight bares the stars,
Ere jewelled night is born,
All silently the Singer left the world.
Beyond the hill he passed,
But singing all the while ; first loud and strong,
Then fainter, till at last
Came only jumbled echoes of a song :—

“ Bend down—the marsh and meadow holds
Pale yellow Pimpernels,
And sun-begotten Marigolds
Thyme, Orchis, Asphodels ” . . .
(Fainter and fainter it grew
Gentle as ebbing tide)
“ Butterfly steeple-jacks blue ” . . .
(Fainter it grew
And died)
Echoing “ Rosemary, Marjoram, Rue,
Lavender, London Pride.”

THE FRENCH MOTHER TO HER UNBORN
CHILD

BEAT quietly, hid heart.
Build, little limbs, and brain divinely wrought,
Grow, grow in peace. Around, the pangs of war
Are powerless to cripple thee or mar
Thy sure perfection. But, if Death besought
For thee, our tethered souls could never part :
Beat quietly, hid heart.
Form, primal thought,
Close-furled and sheltered as the budding Spring.
Unknown, unknowing, yet divinely planned.
But stay awhile, for sounds of battle ring.
Stir, little hand
Unrealized—I count the dragging hours
And yearn to see it clutch at yonder flowers ;
To see thy lucent feet and dimpled frame
And gaze at heav'n-snatched eyes and know
thy name,

THE FRENCH MOTHER

But stay awhile.

For thou art best alone away from Man :

Wait longer, tears unshed and lurking smile

Of joy enshrined where every joy began.

Time hurries as the moments thump along

(Hark, little ears, my heart is beating strong)

Life is aglow, alive, a perfect song.

Around the land is ugly, but apart

I fashion thee in thought. Now hush, for sleep

Is here. Close, eyes unopened, voice unheard,

Be still. Grow on in beauty till day creep . . .

Hark to my whispered word—

Beat quietly, hid heart.



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